

Inaugural Address – Presidential Installation

Dr. MaryLynn West Moynes, Oct. 11, 2012

Good afternoon.

Chair Strachan, Governors, students, alumni, Georgian College colleagues, government, community, college and university partners, guests and family and friends – I stand before you today with a profound sense of humility. It is a great honour and a privilege to be the fifth president of Georgian College.

Let me begin with a warm and hearty thank you to each and every one of you who has come from near and far to commemorate this day.

I am thrilled that my brother Harvey from Alberta and my sister June and niece Katie from Newfoundland – all travelled to be with us. Thank you for coming so far and for always being so near!

(As an aside – Don't worry Adam I didn't forget you – I will get to you later.)

There are two wonderful women in the crowd I want to take some time to acknowledge. Their collective age is 175 years. I will leave it to you to do the math.

Let me begin with my mother Joan, who instilled in all of her children a strong work ethic and a conviction that you never, ever quit anything you start. My mother is passionate about everything she does and knows how to enjoy life to its fullest. It was my mother who talked the principal into passing me after I almost failed kindergarten, and every year until grade five, if the truth be known – a pattern I managed to repeat when I first started university.

Mom – your dedication implanted a high regard for education and I am so very grateful to you for always being my champion and for your never ending love.

I would also like to pay tribute to Dorothy, my mother-in-law, who raised five children fostering an entrenched sense of team work, character and family values. This is a woman who never shied from pitching in when a job needed to be done. She epitomizes an independent, matriarch of a “grassroots” Canadian family who, with great pride juggled running a home, helping with the family farm and working outside the home along the way. Speaking of grassroots, just to demonstrate for you how determined Dorothy is – she still cuts her own grass today – on a riding lawn mower – all two acres of it!

Dorothy, you are an amazing woman. Thank you for accepting the journey I chose – never judging but rather encouraging and always pointing out the opportunities my career gave to my family.

My husband Doug and I want to thank all of our brothers and sisters as well as our adopted family and friends joining us today. We have been blessed in our life with a richness of friends and family.

We are so proud of our youngest son Adam, who also travelled here from Edmonton, where he has worked for the past five years. He has his sights on a business in Ontario and I can honestly tell you every day I hope for the day he finally comes home to stay! Even though he insists on wearing socks with the Maple Leafs logo on them...

Doug and I also share an amazing sense of pride in our eldest son, Ryan and our wonderful daughter-in-law Katie – both accountants and doting parents of our two-and-three-quarter-year-old granddaughter Rachel Mary Moynes – who makes life more precious each and every day. Hi Rachel!

To my husband Doug, you are my rock and the glue that keeps us strong and together. I am honoured to share this adventure with you and I know we both look forward to an incredible journey in the Georgian community, which has been warm and welcoming since we arrived.

Before I move on to my more formal remarks, I want to thank the speakers before me. I acknowledge the Premier for taking the time to send his encouraging words, along with Linda and Tim. Charlotte, Gwen, Anita, Shaun and Dianne – you symbolize the backbone of this institution. Because of you, and who you represent, Georgian is a better place.

Ladies and gentlemen, what a wonderful day this is – a day to pay tribute to the strong history and the promising future of this fine institution. Over an amazing 45-year history, Georgian College has aided people from all walks of life to access quality education, prepared them to get meaningful jobs and helped shape them to be contributing citizens.

Georgian's annual impact to the Ontario economy is \$361 million. However, its impact is perhaps best measured in the 11,000 students currently enrolled this fall, along with the work of more than 60,000 alumni contributing in communities all over the world.

We see how much our graduates are making a difference right here in our own back yard, as well.

And what a big back yard we have. Georgian College is known to have the largest geographical reach of any Ontario college, with strong footholds in Barrie, Orillia, Owen Sound, Midland, Muskoka, Orangeville and South Georgian Bay. So large that it is impossible to get to each of the campuses in a day by car – believe me, I entertained the idea my first day on the job much to the chagrin of the staff. In many ways this geography is one of our strengths.

Being born and raised in Wawa, Ontario – which is about a three-hour drive north of Sault Ste. Marie and one hour from White River – whose notoriety is entrenched in the claim it is the coldest spot in Canada – I learned early in life how easy it was to jump in your car and drive from one community to another to visit friends, attend a hockey game or go to school. I also learned how critically important it was for these communities to maintain connecting relationships. I have already seen firsthand how strong Georgian's community relationships are and how they contribute to our success.

Long before I arrived on campus, Georgian's highly regarded reputation was well known to me. Much of this status is due to our founding fathers...the men and women, who have taught, supported, led and cultivated the unique Georgian culture.

Today is about much more than the installation of a President. The real purpose is to recognize a great college, its mission and the people that make this institution. I celebrate you all – students, staff, faculty, graduates, governors, government, business, community and academic partners. You are the fabric of this distinguished institution, and I am pleased to be counted among you.

We are particularly honoured to have two of Georgian's past presidents with us and I want to personally acknowledge their stellar contributions. Past President Brian Tambllyn and Past President Bruce Hill would you please stand and be recognized (once again).

Ladies and gentlemen, both of these leaders have phenomenal track records – a fact well known in the Canadian academic community. Bruce served during the 1990s, leading through a fiscally challenging time for all post-secondary institutions, yet ensured under his leadership that Georgian not only survived, but thrived. And, of course our most recent President, Brian, whose 13-year tenure resulted in double-digit student growth and much-needed new infrastructure to ensure that students experienced quality learning environments.

Much, more can be said, and should be said, about their leadership however, I believe that the written word would mean so much more. That is why I am so pleased to announce today that I have commissioned a book on the history of Georgian College during your stewardship. This will capture Georgian's journey since our 25th anniversary, chronicling the important moments and events contributing to the Georgian heritage.

By the way, I promise to edit the manuscript personally and I give you both my pledge that not one of your golfing escapades will make the final cut. Seriously folks, our very own Bob Kennedy has agreed to author this project and I am confident he will recount your leadership brilliantly.

In addition to our over 100 highly regarded diploma and degree programs, many of you may be surprised to learn there are more than 1,500 degree students in Georgian's University Partnership Centre. More than 400 of these students are studying toward Georgian College degrees, with the remaining students taking programs offered by our partnering universities. The strength of this partnership is evident as four of our seven partner institutions are represented here today.

I am delighted to share this day with my good friend and colleague Dr. Tim McTiernan, my previous boss and President of UOIT, and my new partners Dominic Giroux, President of Laurentian University, Dr. Brian Stevenson, President of Lakehead University and Dr. Harley d'Entremont, Vice President of Nipissing University.

Ladies and gentlemen while you were waiting for the ceremony to begin, you watched on the screen behind me a review of Georgian's many accomplishments nationally and internationally ...citing awards for our Program Quality Assurance Process Audit, for our number-one ranking in an international student satisfaction survey, and for being named as one of Canada's Top 100 Employers – six times. You learned about our impressive Power of Education campaign and our strength in building sustainable business and industry partnerships. With so much to be proud of ...one wonders...where do we go from here?

As complex as this question is, I know one thing for certain – we cannot stand still. As the external world evolves, so must Georgian College.

A day doesn't go by that our newspapers aren't filled with stories about the rapid rate of technological change, meta communications, and global competition in the new world economy. Although many would argue this new-world society is yet to be defined, the women and men who are looking to find their place in our society today are living the staggering impact of this change. They, more than most, are experiencing the effects of the profound economic shifts. We need them to embrace, and thrive in our global, knowledge-based society.

This is why our society has a sharpened sense of the value of a post-secondary education. This is why the government of Ontario has set a vision for a 70 per cent participation rate in post-secondary education. It is simple, really. We need a highly-skilled workforce to maintain and build on the great life we live in this country today.

What can we learn from the last 25 years to share with our future workforce?

Reflecting back on my own education, I remember heading off with one suit case – filled with jeans and sweaters. The only other possession I had was a brand new quadraphonic stereo – something I absolutely needed to have before setting out – even though I couldn't afford it.

Perhaps a more important reflection of my era than the size of my stereo surrounds the belief we had then. We clearly expected the technological revolution would provide for a more productive society, freeing up increased time for more relaxation and play.

Although we can clearly see the productivity gains, as I look around today, one could say the pundits were very wrong about their prediction of a society that relaxed and played more. Instead, the world of work has become harder and faster, and opportunities to find work have changed significantly.

Therein lies the future of Georgian. We must invest in ways to meet these changes, empower our graduates with new skills and help them succeed in this new knowledge economy.

Over the summer, the Government of Ontario conducted a visioning process to transform postsecondary education in Ontario.

Georgian embraced and responded to this challenge by building on our strategic plan, *Vision 2015*. This plan was designed through a college-wide, collaborative process and it is a true testament to the work that we have been able to leverage this plan to meet the expanded goals of the government today.

We are driven by our mission to inspire innovation, transform lives and connect communities through the power of education. Over the foreseeable future we will focus on three strategic priorities:

1. Extraordinary teaching and learning through entrepreneurship education, experiential opportunities and technology-enabled delivery.
2. Student access, mobility and choice through expanded pathways and innovative partnerships.
3. Institutional sustainability by modeling entrepreneurship and innovation through a process of organizational renewal.

I will expand briefly on these three priorities which will provide our focus and direct our energies in the months and years ahead.

Let's talk about entrepreneurship first.

At Georgian, we define entrepreneurship as a process that transforms innovative ideas into value that builds prosperity and, ultimately, benefits individuals, communities and society. More than a business practice, entrepreneurship is a way of thinking and acting that is a critical skill for success in any sector of the creative economy. I believe there is a misconception by society that this type of thinking cannot be bridged into teaching and learning. We do not accept this at Georgian.

Driving our resolve is a recognition that most of our graduates will be employed in small or medium size enterprises and that the communities we serve need to grow these businesses as part of their economic development strategies.

I also believe our first priority builds on our strong reputation for innovation. By embedding entrepreneurship and experiential learning into all programs, Georgian graduates will join the workplace tooled with a signature learning experience that erases the walls between the classroom and the workplace. Our differentiated approach will ensure Georgian graduates have the skills to become job creators, skills we know are needed to maintain and build Ontario's prosperity across all sectors.

Our second priority is clearly aimed at the complexities of our world by ensuring students have educational options to accelerate their careers. Along with our comprehensive college programs, we will build on our differentiated university partnership model to deliver a 21st Century education. By concentrating on applied, career-focused diplomas and degree credentials we can serve the needs of the work force and individuals from this community.

There are two comments I would like to make about credentials. First, it is very clear to me that one of the savvy characteristics about college students today is that they are focused on getting a job.

No one needs to tell our graduates today that finding a job is key to their career and life plans. They are well prepared and eager to contribute their skills.

My second comment on credentials is that we must remain strategic in Ontario about providing post-secondary education to fill the type of jobs we have and will have in the future. No doubt, this is complicated. However, experience shows, new jobs come from innovation and entrepreneurship. By expanding and strengthening these skills in our Canadian society, we will expand opportunity. To make this part of our Canadian cultural fabric – we must build skills in our graduates – so they can create new jobs.

This evolution to a society of job creators will only work in a society that fundamentally and equally respects the work of those who have entered the work force as an apprentice, diploma graduate or a nuclear physicist. I believe we must recognize that if we continue to limit our thinking that one is superior to another, Ontario will become stagnant and we will not be able to compete.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, our third priority recognizes that a leading institution must lead from within. We at Georgian will focus on productivity, innovation and sustainability. By applying our values of entrepreneurship and innovation as foundational principles through a collaborative process of organizational renewal, we will truly position ourselves as The Entrepreneurship College.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe in the value of education. It is life's greatest equalizer – regardless of where you come from, with the right education and the right attitude, you can make your mark in life.

I fully understand and embrace the enormous responsibility you have given me - to serve our students and this great community.

I am excited and eager to lead Georgian college.

Let me simply close by saying I am confident that the future is full of promise and I know we can accomplish much together.